

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

CAUSES AND COST

OF

CORRUPT STATE LEGISLATION.

BY

A CITIZEN OF PHILADELPHIA.

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PHILADELPHIA:

1863.



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TO THE  
CITIZENS OF PHILADELPHIA,

WHO, IN POLITICS

*Prefer Correct Principle to Corrupt Practice,*

AND WHO

DESIRE A SIMPLER AND LESS EXPENSIVE MODE

OF

COLLECTING OUR REVENUES,

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## LEGISLATION IN PENNSYLVANIA.

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*It is quite time that the attention of the public was called to the subject of State Legislation, and the character and conduct of our State Legislators.*

Our State Senators and Representatives are, in many respects our most important functionaries. Upon their fidelity and wisdom, we in a great measure rely for the proper and full development of our agricultural and mineral resources; they make and modify our insolvent, intestate and criminal laws; our police, military, school and banking systems are virtually under their control; they give corporate rights, by virtue of which building associations, saving funds, insurance companies and railroad companies, spring into life; absorbing our capital, occupying our streets and monopolizing our commerce; the complicated and costly machinery, by which our municipal taxes are gathered, is their handiwork, and the emoluments of those who are connected with that branch of our municipal economy, are augmented or decreased at their bidding: many of our public charities of great merit, are petitioners for their bounty; they break up, at will, the most sacred relation of life; they create new offices, or abolish existing ones; they regulate the number and cost of licenses issued to tradesmen, showmen, and inn-keepers; they change the lines of Judicial, Congressional, and Senatorial Districts, to suit their personal or political interests; they claim the supervision of all our most costly and important

public works ; they fix the time and place of holding our general elections, and make the laws that regulate such elections ; United States Senators are by them nominated and elected ; the House can impeach, and the co-ordinate branch try impeachments.

This brief review of the powers claimed and exercised by Legislators, should satisfy any one that the office is really the most important State office in the gift of the people ; more important than the office of Judge, for he but interprets and enforces the laws Legislators make ; more important even than the office of Governor, for he is powerless, before legislative combinations, to arrest corrupt and dangerous legislation. With this startling fact before us, we should, as mere abstract reasoners, naturally suppose, that Senators and Representatives would be selected with a care and caution commensurate with the importance of their positions ; and especially that they would be what their title supposes them—"Representative men,"—judiciously taken from the several productive classes of society ; for it would be as great a misfortune to have merchants, alone, represent us, as to suffer this useful class of citizens to be wholly unrepresented.

But what is the reality ? Why, so far as this City is concerned, the rule has been and is, to select persons as candidates for the legislature, who represent only the few grovelling Ward politicians who make the nominations ; for if in some districts the question of fitness is taken into the account, such instances are too few to change the general result. For years past men have been sent to Harrisburg to make laws for the Commonwealth, and to watch over and protect the vast, varied, and often conflicting interests of this great metropolis,



who would not be allowed by any prudent citizen to act as his agent in the simplest commercial transaction; most dishonorable men have been dubbed "honorable;" habitual law-breakers have been converted into law-makers; and a set of confirmed idlers have been put in commission to overlook and direct the affairs of the successful mechanic and the thrifty merchant; men without sufficient industry, learning, sobriety, or integrity, to make good suburban constables, have been pushed into senatorial seats, where they have spent their time in alternate exhibitions of stupidity and cupidity, alike disheartening and disgusting to every beholder.

#### WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THIS?

That the manner in which legislative affairs are mismanaged with us, subjects to deserved censure some persons or parties, none can doubt; but upon whom is this censure chiefly to fall? Certainly not upon incompetent and unreliable representatives. In every considerable community there is to be found a class of men too indolent to labor, and too proud to beg, who have to take care of themselves as best they can. If their very obscurity, and want of occupation and reputation, make them the pets of political wire-pullers, why should these favorites tamely give up this advantage? Why should they reject the offer of a free ticket on railroads, with occasional excursions to Scranton, Lehigh Valley, and other places, with mileage amounting from twenty-six to two hundred and eight dollars a session, and seven hundred dollars salary, when all that they are required to give in return is their personal attention to the measures and men that come endorsed by their political godfathers, with the addi-

tional labor of occasionally moving adjournments, calling the yeas and nays, and voting, right or wrong, on bills, &c.

To bitterly censure men who are constitutionally disinclined to either physical or mental labor, but who, nevertheless, have good appetites, staunch digestion, a fair appreciation of mountain scenery, and a moderate love of filthy lucre, for stepping into places that, for the time being, satisfy every want, is simply absurd. We do not blame them for securing the best positions they can command; and if without proper qualifications, or pledge of fidelity from lip or life, they can make their way to still more lucrative and important positions, they would be great simpletons not to do so.

Nor can we chiefly censure the men known as ward politicians for the part they take in bringing about this result. If thousands of voters in a district will allow twenty or thirty men—two-thirds of whom are office-holders, and the rest office-seekers—to pack primary meetings, and then announce their cronies as regular nominees for this and the other office; who will have the temerity to blame this handful of men for riding roughshod over a multitude of listless, nerveless, purposeless spectators? It is a matter of great interest to these little groups of manipulators to have at Harrisburg men whom they can control: for this they toil, giving their time, and, we suppose, some money, and they deserve their recompense. They make our Senators and Representatives, and sometimes make them out of material that would defy the skill of ordinary artisans: and we see no reason why they should not have the confidence of the men who are so largely indebted to their plastic touch for Senatorial form and feature.

That these men are doing immense mischief none can doubt.

At the last election in this State, a Representative who, for a number of years had served his constituency and the Commonwealth with ability and conscientious zeal, was defeated by the noiseless intrigues of one or two such men—men of his own party, too—who, after the work was done, unblushingly avowed themselves its authors, although the consequence to their party was the loss of a United States Senator for six years. For all such mischief its contrivers are censurable; but not alone or chiefly.

This censure should fall in its full severity upon industrious, substantial (and, in every other respect, right-minded) citizens, who for years have suffered these enormities to be worked out without opposition or protest. These citizens, comprising laboring men, mechanics, farmers, merchants (active or retired,) and the members of different professions, make up at least three-fourths of all the legal voters of any given district in our city; a body large enough, in all conscience, to correct any evil that can be reached at the ballot-box, if there is only a well-formed and fixed purpose to do so. This large body of men have fallen into one of two errors: a part of them never voting at either primary or general elections; the other portion voting only in accordance with what they term party usage. The first class lose sight of the great principle that privileges are always coupled with corresponding responsibilities, and that no man is worthy to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, in a country like our own, who shrinks from and shirks the first and most important State duty that springs from that relation. He may be a model of domestic propriety; he may promptly and cheerfully pay the Commonwealth its dues; his timely bounty may refresh and gladden the forsaken and guilty; for the peace and prosperity of his country, his tears and prayers may be given; but, after all

this, if he does not contribute his direct personal efforts and influence to elect virtuous and intelligent legislators and rulers, he fails to perform his highest duty as a citizen, and is of no more actual service to the State, in the time of its greatest need, and at the point of its greatest peril, than any friendly alien among us who owes and pays his allegiance to a foreign State. Remonstrate with these men, and they excuse themselves by pointing to the very condition of things which their own negligence and remissness has produced. Their reasoning, carried into the business of life, would leave them timid spectators of great social, moral, and religious wrongs, none of which they would lift a finger to correct. If this country is ever ruined by corrupt legislation—and we have far more to fear from that source than from the bayonets of all Europe—when the ruin is complete, and the last analysis of that ruin is made, the men of influence, who stubbornly refuse to take part in politics, will be found much more guilty than the few undeserving men who are allowed, unrebuked, to ply their baleful occupations, and to elect to places of trust, men in whom no trust can be placed.

Having considered the conduct of such of our citizens as habitually neglect or refuse to take part in our elections, we will now direct attention to those who never vote outside of what they term “party nominations.” A proper party nomination, made by a fair party vote, is a political result entitled to great consideration; and we are not prepared to censure party men for doubting the propriety of bolting such a nomination, even if the nominee is not, in all respects, what they could desire. But who in the city, since the Act of Consolidation, has known a State Senator or Representative nominated in that manner? It is doubtful whether, if the salvation of the State depended

upon the success of the search, one such instance could be found. These nominations are made by both political parties in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of a fair expression of party opinion upon the subject. This is the especial study of the few men who justly claim to manage, as they please, the Wards in which they reside. To this end party machinery is chiefly constructed; for it is a curious and instructive fact that the makers of this machinery are always its operators; or in other words, that the few working rules of parties as furnished in their manuals are uniformly made and amended by the few Ward cliques, who suffer no rules to be made or so amended as to destroy "their occupation."

Let us see how these "party nominations" are gotten up, that we may accurately determine the measure of respect to which they are entitled. We begin with the first and most important step, which is the preparatory meeting held by each of the parties in the month of August of every year. At these meetings the Democrats nominate and elect precinct officers for the year; while the Republicans make general nominations and select precinct officers. The Democratic party conduct the business with some show of fairness, for they go through with the form of voting, and the whole affair has to outsiders the appearance of a regular election; but in many instances (as the disappointed expectations of many a staunch Democrat can attest,) the whole thing is a farce and a fraud; while under the best of circumstances there is no guarantee of fairness; the vote is not by registration; no reliable tally lists are kept; they make no return of votes to any superior body; the power of challenge goes only to the challenged party's residence or Democracy; the judges in many cases are not sworn, and the business of select-



ing precinct officers, (who, by the way, are occasionally men of wonderful dexterity,) is conducted with less formality than would be observed by a village debating society in selecting a door-keeper for the evening.

The manner in which the Republican or People's party conduct this business is so grossly bold and vicious as to justly entitle it to the contempt and scorn of the good and true men of that party. Their mode of settling this grave question is substantially as follows: The executive committees of the several wards designate by notice the time and place of holding these meetings. The chairmen of the meetings (elected *viva voce*) asks for general nominations, after which they usually call on persons present from the different precincts of the ward to select and name their precinct officers. Where there is no contest in the ward or district, the whole thing is a mere matter of form, and awakens no interest; but when it is necessary "to put through" some favorite who has plenty of money and muscle, but no merit, then the whole strategy of the campaign is crowded into these primary meetings, held in most cases in a room on the second or third floor of a tavern. The whole strife is for precinct officers, to be selected on the spot by the citizens of each precinct who are present, and who have the good fortune to be recognized by the self-constituted precinct representatives, who, standing on chairs or tables, with prepared ballots in their hands, and surrounded by the few men of their precincts who have been sent there for that particular service, cry, with stentorian voice, "First Precinct, here!" "Come on, Fifth Precinct!" "Ninth Precinct, in with your votes!" and before a quiet and uninitiated citizen can work his way through the excited and swaying crowd who on such occasions always occupy the front and principal part of

the room, these unassuming hat-holders have finished their work, and announced to the Chairman the precinct officers selected, who, in turn, announces the selections to the clerks, who duly record the same with a gravity that is marvellous. This is the usual form of procedure. If in some few wards there is a slight change of programme, there is no change of result. This piece of work disposed of, and the proper convivialities attended to, there is but one remaining nail to clench, and all is safe; that is to force the nominations that are sure to follow—for there would be no strife about precinct officers, if that result was not guaranteed at the time of their selection—upon the thinking, respectable and really controlling portion of the party as a “party nomination;” and to compass this, political brokers and life-long truce breakers—men who, in politics, would betray their best friends and sell their birthright, turn moralists and lecture their old and venerable neighbors, and temperate and industrious mechanics, and high-toned and successful merchants, upon the dreadful enormity of disregarding “party nominations.” And strange to say, many good citizens listen to these abominable sophistries, and by listening and heeding, not only smother the voice of reason, pride, and conscience, but offer an annual premium to unblushing fraud and corruption. It certainly requires no argument to prove that primarily no man can be held responsible for the unknown and unauthorized acts of a stranger; nor can he be politically held responsible for any result that he did not authorize, and that he had no adequate opportunity of preventing. He is no more in honor bound to support an obnoxious nomination, brought about by the intrigues of a few men at a preparatory or precinct meeting, than he is in honor bound to pay the bills of the bacchanalian revels that often follow these successful political raids.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

It is time that the tax-paying and order-loving citizens of Philadelphia directed their attention to the consequences that follow from sending to Harrisburg, as their Representatives and Senators, men in whom public confidence cannot be placed. A careful examination of this subject will satisfy any impartial student, that as a community we have too long neglected this investigation, and that while we have been engaged in our several occupations, and boasted that we never meddled with politics, we have individually lost the ceaseless vigilance and self-sacrificing spirit that are alike the glory of a Republic and its strength; and further, that if the developments that have been made at Harrisburg this winter—developments of bribery and corruption, so multiplied and fearful, that a bill is now before the House, that in its provisions classes the hordes of borers that infest the place with professional thieves and pick-pockets, and that subjects them to like summary arrest and imprisonment—if such developments do not challenge attention, deep, earnest and abiding, then we as a body politic, have already become demoralized and sensual, and notwithstanding our vaunted patriotism, are much riper for anarchy than we imagine.

So notoriously and continuously bad has been the reputation of the Pennsylvania Legislature for years past, that it is next to impossible to find competent and respectable men as candidates for seats in that body. Every such person naturally shrinks from an association that appears in the aggregate to be both sensual and devilish. During the present session many of the best and purest members of the House, men above suspicion (among whom were some from our own city,) have expressed the most serious apprehensions, that outside of the circles in which



they were known, they might be judged by the company they were compelled to keep. This condition of things subjects to severe loss any community, and especially a community like our own, where business men have occupation for the whole year, which they cannot interrupt for a period of three months. If law making in this Commonwealth was a reputable calling, we have among us hundreds of retired merchants, mechanics and professional men, who would make capital legislators, and in whose hands the most sacred interests of either public or private life could be trusted, without an apprehension; but while the borers outside of our legislative halls and their allies inside, make legislation a matter of degrading traffic, such men would about as soon be sent to a Small-pox Hospital as to Harrisburg. To this great loss, the present system subjects us.

To the same cause we may safely attribute the disrespect and disfavor that a large portion of the legislature have so long manifested towards our city. Philadelphia has for years had to contend, at Harrisburg, with the most bitter and unrelenting prejudice. It has become almost a confirmed habit to look upon her as a great absorbent, consuming the revenue and attempting to control the politics of the State, without contributing her portion of dignity, labor, or wealth. Her splendid charities have been ridiculed. Her most liberal and promising industrial and commercial enterprises scorned as the offspring of her selfishness; and her claims to respectful consideration treated as though she were destitute of honesty or honor. The fact is patent, and Philadelphia has to blame herself only, that there are but few of the law makers who do her reverence; for, the plain common-sense people, in the interior of the State, judge of cities as they would of other corporations; and, when they have intro-

duced to them, as the confidential agent of an Insurance or Manufacturing company, a noisy, swearing, drinking, rollicking fellow, who has the audacity to tax, for his support, every man he meets, and who, evidently, profits more by systematic plunder than by stated pay, they find it very difficult to coax into life, even momentary respect for principals, who can trust their business and business reputation in the keeping of such a vagabond. And when these plain men from rural districts have for years met in our Legislative Halls, as the representatives of a great metropolis, persons who were not only mercenary beyond the hope of reform, but who in not a few instances, openly outrage every sense of self-respect and propriety, (such a case has recently occurred, too shocking for recital, but furnishing abundant food for scandal,) they form an exceedingly low opinion of the morality of the constituency that lavishes its honors upon such sensual and depraved recipients. Well may it be said:

“The thorns we reap are of the tree we planted; they pierce us and we bleed; we should have better known what fruit would spring from such a seed.”

Another unavoidable consequence of the existing condition of things at our State Capital, is the vast amount of time, labor and money required to secure the simplest matter of legislation. We speak not of cumbrous bills, or of bills that propose to relieve from some just burden, or to give some unjust advantage; like the recent railroad bill—to provide funds to pass which, a tax of thirty-one dollars—was placed upon every passenger railway car in the city; but comparatively insignificant private bills. The passage of such bills, unless placed in the hands of “some one of the few honest and disinterested representatives from the city,” involve the trouble and expense of one, two, five or a dozen visits

to Harrisburg, and after all this is done, it not unfrequently happens that the labor and money expended in going to and from, and paying exorbitant board while there, are lost, and the session closes on the bills untouched, for the simple reason that in the vernacular of the "ring," (which this year is strong enough to control both Houses and in which Philadelphia is ably represented,) "there is nothing in it." Had we a faithful representation, not one hour of time would be lost, or a dollar required to secure any proper legislation, except in the very few instances in which it was deemed necessary for the parties themselves to appear before some committee having their bills under consideration.

While considering the consequences of sending to Harrisburg men who attend to themselves first, and the public afterwards, we must not overlook the fact that the league for mischief between such men is universal and strong. It has always been so in Church and State. Religious apostates in every age have labored with more intense earnestness to extend their heresies, than those resting serenely in the persuasion of their catholicity have, to spread the truth. It is equally true here. Select to-day the worst men at Harrisburg, and you will discover by proofs most indubitable, that the active and controlling sympathy betwixt them and their home adherents is far truer and stronger than the sympathy betwixt the honest representative and the honest and respectable portion of the community. Let your honest representative be assailed by some unscrupulous calumniator, and among his peers he will be likely to find but few and feeble defenders; but let the simple truth be told of the men who, by demerit have been raised to their bad eminence, and a howl will go up equal to that in Ephesus, when

Demetrius called together the workmen of like occupation, and said, "Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth."

This bond of sympathy not only enables these "Ring leaders" to hold their own positions, but it gives them the power to compass the defeat, sooner or later, of any colleague who has the nerve and the temper to thwart their schemes. For the last ten years there have been some good men in every delegation from this city and county; and while such men have pursued the even tenor of their way, not interfering with the "perquisites," they have been tolerated; but the very moment that such colleagues have opposed either public or private plunder, they have been threatened with banishment, and in a large majority of instances the leaders have whistled up their cohorts, and by force or fraud the sentence has been executed. And these argus-eyed statesmen are still intent upon their work. Within forty-eight hours after a high-minded, conscientious and able representative from this city moved for the recall of the obnoxious railroad bill then just passed, there was in a certain room in a certain hotel at Harrisburg, a meeting, at which the conduct of this worthy man was freely discussed, and it was openly stated that he should not be returned. Let the men who never vote and the good citizens who shudder at the idea of bolting "party nominations," made in the manner and by the parties described in a former communication, seriously determine how much they have directly contributed in bringing about a political condition that subjects to inquisitorial censure and punishment the few men we have at Harrisburg who dare to do and defend the right.

Another consequence is the imposition of enormous burdens upon the city, coupled with the loss of important sources of

trade and revenue. Being entirely at the mercy of the Legislature, and the Legislature being at the call of the highest and best bidder, it is no uncommon thing for that body, for stipulated compensation, to change an office that was intended to yield its occupant an income of two or three thousand dollars a year, into a princely sinecure. If the Judges of our Courts, learned in the law, are compelled to devote their whole time and attention to their judicial duties, some of them scarcely enjoying a brief summer vacation, for the small annual salary of about two thousand eight hundred dollars, fixed at that figure by our legislators, who have thus far, on the ground of a careful pains-taking of public moneys, refused to listen to respectful appeals for a moderate increase of these salaries; we ought to take it for granted, that the same economical and pains-taking body would stubbornly refuse to exceedingly subordinate and inferior men in exceedingly subordinate and inferior offices, a larger salary than they allow to the members of the judiciary. Yet he must be a dull scholar indeed who has not long since discovered that there is not a prominent county officer whose salary is not double that of either our Mayor or Judges; while in some cases, by special legislation—bargained and paid for, and paid for liberally, too, offices that were intended to afford a living income only, have been made to yield, in one way and another, an income larger than the aggregate salaries of the Governor, and Attorney-General of the State, and the eleven Judges composing the Supreme Court, and the Courts of Common Pleas and District Court of this county. And even this estimate is by many reliable and observant persons believed to be far below the reality. The truth is, the public are compelled to guess at the actual receipts of certain pet offices, created and supplemented by Legislative favor; for these receipts have not



been, nor are they likely to be, the subject of wholesome investigation and restraint, as the avenues of fraud and extortion are too multiform and sinuous ever to be successfully explored. We can judge only by the scanty fruits we are permitted to see from time to time—such as the sudden and profuse wealth of principals, and the luxurious living of subordinates upon small nominal salaries that justify no such display, and that, relied on alone for support, would, in a single year, lead to remediless bankruptcy and ruin—and judging by these fruits, the annual burdens imposed upon us, not by mere legislative permission, but by direct legislative action, far exceed the highest estimates ever placed upon them. To say that this burden amounts in the aggregate to one hundred thousand dollars a year, is to say a very tame and common place thing, for it far exceeds that sum. But placing it at that figure, what a pitiful instance of political degradation and abasement does a mighty city like our own present, when she unresistingly allows the “publicans at her gates,” and her hewers of wood and drawers of water to thrust their greedy hands into her Treasury, and bear away in prodigal profusion the hard earned tolls and tributes of her prudent, peaceable and law-abiding sons and daughters? \*

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\* The Receiver of Taxes was an office, created at a salary of \$2,500, with the duty cast upon him of making daily payments into the City Treasury. The income of that officer was first increased by a charge of seventy-five cents against each delinquent tax payer for the warrant; then, in all cases of the sale of property by the sheriff, the Receiver would collect the full tax from the sheriff, and pay into the City Treasury the amount, decreased by the discount, which was taken off, and kept for himself,—then, by special legislation, whereby he secured five per cent. on all outstanding taxes, which is alone equivalent to \$25,000 per annum—then, taking from the City Solicitor the power to collect

In summing up the consequences of our facile legislation, it will be well for us to make out an inventory of franchises still in our corporate possession, and inviolate. If the poorest man, aye, the meanest criminal, has some rights that he sacredly guards, and that it would be ruthless and monstrous to disturb, we should naturally suppose that a great metropolis, numbering half a million of souls, and paying to the Commonwealth an immense

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outstanding taxes, which had been done for nothing, and giving it to a private Solicitor, with an additional per-centage of five per cent.

If general rumor may be credited, the income of the Receiver has been further increased by trafficking in the appointments of collectors of outstanding taxes; in increasing the valuation of tax bills; in dividing the per-centage with his private Solicitor; and in discounting, with public funds kept in banks, to private credit.

During the session of 1862, the collection of the State and Mercantile Tax was taken from the City Treasurer, and transferred to the Receiver of Taxes, with a largely increased per-centage for collecting. The House immediately repealed the bill, but the Senate refused to do so, until certain parties were put in a condition to refund two thousand dollars that had been paid for the original transaction.

Early last session a representative from the city introduced a bill repealing the five per cent. tax, &c., which bill, curiously enough, was referred to the Committee on Corporations, (City members of that committee, Messrs. Quigly, Barger, Schofield, Kerns, and Sutphin.) The Committee not reporting the bill, late in the session another city member introduced a similar bill, which was referred to the Committee on the Local Judiciary. While the last named Committee were considering the bill, with the view of reporting it—they were waited upon by a member of the Committee on Corporations, who informed the Committee of the Judiciary that his Committee were then considering the same bill. This information relieved the Judiciary Committee from the further consideration of the subject; and the Committee on Corporations never reported. Can it be possible that the first bill was introduced only for the purpose of occupying the ground, and keeping quiet those who were really anxious that this great wrong should be corrected.

revenue, would proudly and pre-eminently maintain, untouched and unpolluted, the elements of municipal independence and power. This may have been our purpose; but, while we have slept, our locks have been shorn, and our strength and glory have departed.

We once had, in the General Assembly, a representation corresponding with our population,—but that is lost. True, we have twenty-one seats in that body assigned to our use; but at least two-thirds of that number would be better filled by second-hand automatons than by the adventurers who now occupy them. We once had a representation corresponding with our moral and commercial importance, when such men as John Sergeant, John M. Read, Tyson, Lehman, Scott, Williams, Sharswood, Spackman, Trego, and Price—all of whom were distinguished for their courtesy, ability, and integrity—represented us; but for these have been substituted a crowd of freebooters of every political, social, and moral hue. We once supposed that our local legislation was in the hands of our City Councils; but our City Fathers are now of no more account than so many beardless sophomores. Street sweeping, street paving, pipe laying, and tax gathering, they have nothing to do with; that business having been transferred to Harrisburg. We were once justly proud of our straight and beautiful streets, and walked them as though conscious of our ownership; but now we have scarce a mile of these great thoroughfares left us. They have been bartered to corporations, whose purpose is as plain as the iron rails that betoken the extent of their power. Our financial affairs were at one time conducted with some show of economy, but the day of our humiliation and shame has come upon us, for there is not a city in the Union that receives so small a per-centage of its revenue for



its own use and improvement, as our own. If other cities are equally taxed, they have commodious, and often magnificent public buildings and parks and libraries given them for their money, while we have but few and insignificant monuments of municipal enterprise or progress. Here the servant takes the master's portion.

We once ventured to instruct our Representatives and Senator as to what we wished done or left undone; but for successive years our most urgent requests and instructions, made in official and respectful form, have been treated—not with silent—but with open-mouthed scorn and contempt. One Representative from this city, recently, in his place, expressed himself as (in his own opinion) far above the Councils of the city; and, while we write, a Senator has attached a supplement to the act incorporating the Lombard Street Passenger Railway Company to construct their railway *without* the consent of Councils, which provision was passed by a vote of seventeen to fifteen. What have we left? If we except the doubtful and rapidly decreasing ability to redress our wrongs and restore our rights—nothing, absolutely nothing, that is free from legislative encroachment; our inventory, stretched to its utmost limits, would not equal in length the inventory of a beggar's wardrobe.

Our legislation has been bad enough heretofore. Certain officials, who have grown plethoric upon plunder, have year after year paid their thousands of dollars to secure the passage of bills that would swell their already overgrown incomes. Measures of great importance to the commercial men of Philadelphia have been suffered to lie untouched, because the parties would not pay a stipulated price, to secure favorable consideration. Only last year, a bill that promised to bring to this city an immense

trade that New York threatened to monopolize, was held in the hands of certain parties until it fell, the holders openly stating that it was worth at least one thousand dollars to report it. But the iniquities of the present session throw into obscurity all former acts of speculation and villiany. During the entire session, the sordid and unblushing fraternity, made up of men from both political parties, as the votes on certain obnoxious bills abundantly show, were other proofs wanting, have spent their nights in concocting schemes of mischief, which they have made it the business of the day to consummate. The private protestations and public denunciations of the good men of the body, coupled with the efforts of the Speaker of the House, have failed to hold in check, for one brief hour, the hungry, ravenous horde that curse the place. So openly and pre-eminently vile has been the legislation of the past winter, that all good citizens, who have scanned it, would rejoice to learn that some arrangement had been made to collect and disburse our revenue, and that it was politically and physically impossible to convene another Legislature for the next ten years. And yet the principal actors in this costly and fearful business are as self-possessed and as serene as philosophers. They hear the muttering thunder, and see the gathering storm, but are strong in the belief that their "body guards at home will be equal to any emergency," should not the last traces of public disapprobation have disappeared before another autumn. They may be correct in their opinions, but, if they are so, our helplessness and our hopelessness travel in company.

## CAN A REMEDY BE FOUND?

The only remaining question that we propose to consider is, whether a remedy can be found for the exhausting (and unless checked) fatal evils under which we are suffering. We have delayed our suggestions upon this point until we could learn the opinions and observe the movements of the men, who last winter made traffic of our highest and dearest interests, at Harrisburg, and who are once more among us. Our observations satisfy us that these men, without distinction of party, have joined in an effort to assist each other, and they are confident of success. They say, without hesitation, that they cannot be defeated. More than this, they are at this hour compassing the defeat of one of the few competent and conscientious representatives sent from this city last autumn. We shall see whether or not they reckon without their host.

That there are grave and almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of any radical reform in this department of our political economy, is a melancholy fact that it were idle to deny. Lost ground is regained only at great sacrifice, and this has been so long lost, that the harpies who occupy it look upon it as their own.

In searching for a remedy, we shall deceive ourselves, if we expect any assistance from party hacks, ward wire-pullers or political brokers. Old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, polished and rude, washed and unwashed, they are against us to a man. Some against us from fear, some from favor, some from policy, and more from want of principle.

Nor can we confidently rely on effecting a change by attend-

ing primary meetings, and attempting to make better nominations. As we have shown, primary meetings, as they are conducted, and as they will be conducted until the change is accomplished, are a farce and a fraud. You could not better please the men who boast that they control as they please wards and precincts, than to refer this question to primary meetings. It would be as satisfactory as it would be to the burglar to be tried by his boon companion, and accomplice. Primary meetings are the traps made and baited by the very men who have corrupted our legislature, and very nearly, if not quite, ruined our country; for the noiseless but perfect capture and subjugation of honest citizens, who desire to do their duty, and who, when they have voted at primary elections, have imagined that their vote was of some account in helping to secure the nomination of some worthy man. Vain hope, against the arithmetical strategy of some expert clerk, or the magic manipulations of some pliant judge. Those who desire to send a better class of men to Harrisburg need not rely upon what they can do at primary meetings, for what the compass is to the mariner, or unimpaired credit to the merchant, or false weights to the knave, or impudence to the beggar, or the stiletto to the assassin, primary meetings are to unscrupulous and villainous politicians, and the sooner the public recognize this the better.

Nor have we any higher promise of amendment and reform, by confiding this duty, primarily, to political ward organizations, either secret or open. Any one who has attentively studied the progress of such open organizations for the last six months, as that progress has been developed by newspaper reports, will be satisfied that it is the purpose of the men who

have heretofore "ruled and ruined," to take the ultimate and not distant control of these ward organizations; or, failing in this, to break them up—for in various lists of officers already in place, are the names of parties who have assisted in overloading and breaking down former organizations, both open and secret, that for a while threatened to strip them of their local political influence. Of the secret political organizations said now to exist in this city, both among loyal and disloyal men, we know nothing; but speaking to loyal men who belong to such organizations, (if such organizations there be,) we ask whether this subtle element has not already infused itself into your midst? And whether it has not already made itself notorious in seeking for the chief seats in your places of convocation, and in advising you what to do and what to leave undone? and whether it is not already stealthily laying its merciless hands upon the very vitals of your associations? And if you chance to answer negatively, do so with fear and trembling, for the Philistines will be upon you as surely as night follows day. You can form no secret political ward organizations that they will not ferret out and find their way into, and you can have no political purpose so high or holy, that they will not pervert, pollute and debauch it to their own base ends. We have nothing to hope from entrusting this work primarily to local organizations.

Independent nominations, made after other disgusting nominations are made, and made without concert of action, without funds to pay the necessary expenses of printing tickets and placards, and informing the public through the newspaper press of the necessities and purposes of the independent movement, and, above all, without good men in each precinct of the



district, who are pledged to be at the polls through the day as the open advocates of the ticket, and with tickets in their hands ready for use, have been and must be, inoperative and worthless. Such nominations serve only to encourage the stall-fed politicians of the district, and to discourage honest citizens who desire a different condition of things.

It is unnecessary to add, that there is no possibility of any of the Ring retiring from the coming canvass. They have returned from their revels in high feather, with skeleton consciences, depleted modesty, plethoric purses, and unwieldy self-importance. They can be seen on any day of the week, going their rounds with the regularity of policemen—but with not a tithe of their merit—hob-nobbing with the nauseating vendors of their fame and popularity, and manufacturing capital for the coming contest. To expect these men to give place to the wisest seers the city can boast, would be as idle as to expect the leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin.

This is a gloomy recital, and all the more gloomy from the fact that these crying wrongs have so long been uncorrected. Perhaps a brighter and better future is before us.

The first remedial element that we need is a clear conviction of the magnitude of the evils of our present system of legislation. If these evils are regarded by the public as a mere inconvenience, or at most a disgrace, we are in no condition to hope for a cure.

Only as we grapple with and master the great elementary truth, that as no man can be better than his principles, so no Commonwealth can be purer than its laws; only as we see in corrupt State and National Legislation the remediless ruin, near or remote, of the Commonwealth and the County; only as we

comprehend the fact, that at this hour there is but a step betwixt us and that ruin, and that when that step is taken, and a corrupt judiciary is superadded to a corrupt legislature, the last barrier is broken down, and the last obstacle to the wildest anarchy removed; only as we comprehend this, are we ready for that action that the perils of the hour demand.

Not less important, as an element of reform, is the conviction that the respectable citizens of Philadelphia are, alone, to blame for not being properly represented at Harrisburg.

Any attempts to transfer this guilt to corrupt and venal men, is a hypocritical and fatal apology for the wrong. We repeat it, the respectable portion of the public are justly chargeable with the mischief—that bad representatives from this county, have wrought, on the same principle that they would be morally responsible for the mischief and misery caused by their placing madmen, or drunkards, or gamblers, with a full knowledge of their character, in places of trust.

There is not a legislative district in the county that is not under the positive political control of citizens who are high-minded and honest, and yet through sheer indifference, or blind subserviency to mere party usages, or under the idle and unmanly plea of a dire necessity, these controlling influences have assisted in electing to the most important State Office in the gift of the people, many men who, if they had their just deserts, would be permanently cared for by the State, instead of polluting its Legislative Halls.

Only as this unpalatable truth is acknowledged by the men among us, who in all their private relations scorn to do wrong, but who in their political actions rarely have the independence

and high-toned moral courage to do right, may we hope for a change.

This second step of progress is to be followed by demanding something more of our representatives than mere loyalty. No man should be allowed to represent us, any where, who is not loyal—loyal to the core.—Aye, whose loyalty does not intensify with our country's perils, and shine brightest and steadiest in the gloom of our darkest night.

But while loyalty is the first, it is not, by any means, the only qualification. There are, doubtless, loyal dog catchers, loyal pickpockets, loyal burglars, and loyal convicts; but, notwithstanding the fealty of these classes to the Government, their election as representatives would not be such a *radical change* as the exigencies of the case demand. We need, in our representatives, fair intelligence, severe honesty, and unmistakable loyalty; and these combined qualifications will alone secure proper legislation. The absence of these convictions, and this demand, will baffle and defeat all attempts at reform; their existence, to any considerable extent, will put in immediate active operation measures that will secure us a good representation at Harrisburg.

A few good citizens, in every badly represented district, will meet at some suitable place, and, after a free interchange of opinions upon the subject, will agree upon and obtain the consent of some suitable person to run as a candidate for the Legislature. They have then only to make their announcement to the public, and to pledge themselves, in good faith, to raise the necessary sum (say two hundred dollars,) to pay for advertisements, tickets, posters, &c., and to be represented at each precinct of the district during the day of election, with tickets in their hands, to be



respectfully offered to all voters. If this is done, and the announcement of candidates is made by the first or middle of August, the work of reform is well inaugurated in every district where such nominations are made, and the result cannot but be satisfactory. For, first, this step, in all closely contested districts, will compel one or the other of the parties to adopt the earlier nomination or be defeated; and, in the second place, it will give to thousands of good citizens who have not the energy or influence to take the initiative in such an enterprise, a welcome opportunity to show how heartily they have despised the nominations they were compelled to support, or remain away from the polls. All other remedies have been tried in vain. This is, as yet, untried; but, if followed in good faith, it cannot be unsuccessful, for it avoids the farce of primary meetings; it breaks the magic wand of political wizards; it appeals to every truly patriotic citizen, not only as a just, but as an indispensable necessity; and what is better than all—in the pledge to be at each precinct, with tickets, during the day of election—it guarantees the personal attention, at the right time and place, for want of which, “independent nominations” following, instead of preceding other nominations, have perished.

One word in conclusion. The men who were a disgrace to us last winter, at Harrisburg, are aware that public attention has been called to the necessity of a Legislative Reform, and they are making herculean efforts to be returned. Forgetful of the fact that, on the twelfth day of April, 1861, all former party lines were obliterated, and that from that fearful hour to this, there have been but two parties among us: one pledged to support the Government in putting down a rebellion; the other embarrassing and hindering the Government in its great work;

they are incessantly prating about the sacredness of party obligations, and the sin of disregarding "party nominations." This is their only watchword—their only hope. They will resist, to the death, all attempts to put honest men in their places; and, if they succeed, will return to their posts with sharpened appetites for peculation and plunder. If they are defeated, as they should be, they will never again be heard of. Let all good men and true, unite in this work, and we shall gain a victory that will bless the Commonwealth.